

Singapore firm offers free trial for online video recorder service

By **ROLAND LIM**

GOING to be out for the evening but don't want to miss that episode of *Survivor*? Now with a click of your mouse, you can record the show for viewing later – and all for free.

The service, which is currently available for the public to sign and trial, is provided by Singapore's RecordTV Pte Ltd. Some of the technology involved in the service have been acquired from RecordTV of Los Angeles, a company founded in 1999 which pioneered the online video recording service.

Soon after the US-based RecordTV company introduced its service, the company was caught up in lawsuits alleging copyright infringement – it then put its assets up for sale.

Carlos Fernandes, chief executive of Singapore-based RecordTV explained: "The original RecordTV was said to be violating copyrights by allowing users to record what they would otherwise not be able to see."

Mr Fernandes and his colleague and company co-founder Varsha Jagdale came up with system – for which a patent is pending – that determines a user's right to view broadcast content and enables the user to record and playback only those shows that they can legitimately view.

"The new invention helped us fit in the missing piece in the original RecordTV model, thereby making it legal," Mr Fern-



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Dynamic duo: RecordTV CEO Carlos Fernandes (left) and company co-founder, Varsha Jagdale came up with a system that would not infringe copyright laws

andes said. They subsequently purchased US-based RecordTV's assets, including its trademark, and started the local RecordTV company which is now trialling the service in Singapore.

The free service, which promises "one-click recording", allows a registered user to store free-to-air TV shows from Channel News-Asia, Channel 5 and Channel 8 for up to 30 days. Users can login to the website, www.recordtv.com, to select the recorded shows and view them via streaming video on their computers, or on other devices connected to the Internet, such as mobile phones.

So how does the company expect to make money? Mr Fernandes acknowledged that RecordTV has yet to decide on a business model, but said it is exploring a number of options, one of which is to license its technology to cable TV providers.

"We already have some major content owners interested in leveraging this model – some have even expressed interest in buying us outright," he said.

"Some venture capitalists have told us we could explore advertising, subscriptions, commerce or social networking directly, or we could offer our customers a product that gives broadcasters, content own-

ers and cable TV operators this ability."

RecordTV is looking to raise between US\$3 million and US\$5 million to fund its expansion into Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and possibly China and India. Mr Fernandes also noted that the Media Development Authority of Singapore did not consider RecordTV as a broadcaster or a video-on-demand service, thus it need not apply for either licences.

However, the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore has deemed RecordTV as a remote storage offering for consumers and thus it needed – and has obtained – a service-based operator licence.